

19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C

August 8, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1ST READING: WISDOM 18:6-9

For when you punished our adversaries, in this you glorified us whom you had summoned.

PSALM 33

Blessed are the people God has chosen to be his own.

2ND READING: HEBREWS 11:1-2, 8-12

Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things unseen.

GOSPEL: LUKE 12:35-40

Blessed are those servants who the master finds vigilant on his arrival.

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In today's readings we hear two important messages: the first is that God's Word is God's Promise and the second is to be prepared.

If you had been on the British coast in 1845 you might have seen two ships boarded by 138 of England's finest sailors setting sail for the Arctic. Their task: to chart the Northwest Passage around the Canadian arctic to the Pacific Ocean. The captain, Sir John Franklin, hoped this effort would be the turning point in Arctic exploration. History shows that it was. Not because of its success, but because of its failure. The ships never returned. Every crew member died. And those who followed in the expedition's path learned this lesson: Prepare for the journey. Apparently Franklin did not. Though the voyage was projected to last two or three years, they only carried a twelve day supply of fuel for the auxiliary steam engines. But what they lacked in fuel, they made up for in entertainment. Each ship carried a 1,200 volume library, musical instruments, china place settings for officers and men, cut-glass wine goblets and sterling silver flatware and games like backgammon. The sailors carried no special clothing to protect them from the cold; only the uniforms of Her Majesty's fleet. They were noble and respectful, but thin and inadequate. The inevitable happened. The two ships had sailed ill-prepared into the frigid waters. Ice coated the decks, the spars, and the rigging. The sea froze around the rudder and trapped the ships. Was the crew preparing for an Arctic Expedition or a Caribbean Cruise? Isn't it strange how professionals could embark on such a journey so ill-prepared?

Stranger still how we do the same. We sometimes act as though the Christian life is a retirement cruise. We have little fuel but lots of entertainment. We are more concerned with looking “snappy” than being prepared for the inevitable bad weather. We give little thought to our destination, but plenty of games to keep us distracted. And so when the winds stop filling our sails, we have no fuel for the journey. And the question I hear is, “Why is God doing this?” But God is not to blame. If we sail unprepared it’s in spite of, not because of God. God left detailed instructions about this life’s voyage. He even tells us what to pack: *Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.*

What prompted Jesus to begin the gospel with a proclamation of the Father’s generosity and switch to the admonition to be prepared? Did he, who was so aware of the human heart, see doubt in the hearts of his disciples? Did he read confusion in their faces? I don’t know what Jesus saw in their faces but I know what he sees in ours.

He sees what the airline attendant sees when she gives her preflight warnings. He sees what physicians often see when they tell patients to stop smoking, change their diets, or quit drinking. He sees what priests see when we see a couple preparing for marriage and warn them of the uncertainties.

“Yeah, sure, but probably not.”

We don’t say the words but we think them. Sure, this plane could crash, but then it probably won’t. So, rather than listen, I’ll just go on reading my magazine. Sure, I could die from my behavior, but then again, maybe I won’t. So, I’ll wait awhile before I make any changes. Sure our marriage might fail, but then again, why work at it?

What anxiety must have struck the crew of Sir John Franklin’s expedition when they got stuck in the ice? By the way, think about it, what supplies are we taking for this inevitable journey? Are you carrying our silver and games? Have you packed grudges and anger or love and joy? Have you stuffed your barns or shared with the poor? Don’t be fooled, what may seem to matter here won’t

matter when we reach your father's house. What matters is not what you have but who you know. Be prepared. We do not want to be left out in the cold.